MIT's Oldest and Largest Newspaper

thetech.com

The Tech
Established 1881

Volume 141, Number 33

Thursday, January 13, 2022

WEATHER, p. 2

THU: 42°F | 33°F
Partly sunny.

FRI: 38°F | 5°F
Up to 1" of snow.

SAT: 15°F | 5°F
Sunny and windy

MIT, 15 other univs. sued by students for working together to limit fin. aid awards

Defendant universities' admissions alleged to not be fully need-blind

By Kristina Chen
EDITOR IN CHIEF

MIT is among 16 private national universities being sued by five former students in the U.S. District Court in Illinois for collaborating in a "price-fixing cartel" meant to limit the financial aid awards.

The suit, filed Jan. 9, claims that the defendant universities used a shared methodology to calculate applicants' financial aid, which resulted in price-fixing and unfairly limited financial aid.

The universities are permitted to collaborate on financial aid under Section 568 of the Higher Education Act, which exempts universities that participate in need-blind (do not consider the applicant's financial status) admission from federal antitrust laws that would usually prevent them from collaborating. However, the suit alleges that the schools are not fully need-blind, use a methodology that "deals exclusively with the family's ability to pay for college," and therefore do not qualify for the antitrust exemption.

The suit alleges that of the 16 universities, MIT and eight others "made admissions decisions *with regard* to the financial circumstances of students and their families, thereby disfavoring students who need financial aid." The other seven defendants "may or may not have adhered to need-blind admissions policies, but they nonetheless conspired with the other Defendants."

The suit writes that over 170,000 former undergraduate students who received partial financial aid at the defendant schools have been overcharged "by at least hundreds of millions of dollars."

MIT wrote that "MIT is reviewing the filing and will respond in court in due time."

In addition to MIT, other defendants in the suit include Brown University, the California Institute of Technology, the University of Chicago, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Duke University, Emory University, Georgetown University, Northwestern University, the University of Notre Dame, the University of Pennsylvania, Rice University, Vanderbilt University, and Yale University.

The suit resembles a civil antitrust case in 1991 in which MIT and the eight Ivy League universities were charged with violating the Sherman Antitrust Act by working together to limit price competition on financial aid to prospective students.

In that case, the Ivy League schools signed a consent decree, agreeing to not collaborate on financial aid. MIT refused to sign the decree and instead participated in another federal trial. As a result of the trial, the U.S. Department of Justice dismissed the case against MIT and established new guidelines for non-profit universities to cooperate on need-based financial aid, which Section 568 was modeled after.

FARIN TAVACOLI—THE TECH

The first snow of the year blankets campus, Friday.

IN SHORT

Jan. 13 at 5 p.m. is the final deadline for continuing students to pre-register for the spring and the deadline for continuing students to select preferences for spring CI-H/CI-HW subjects.

All eligible MIT community members must **submit proof of receiving a COVID-19 booster** to *covid-vaccine.mit.edu* by Jan. 14.

Jan 17. is Martin Luther King Jr. Day, an Institute holiday.

Jan. 20 is the deadline for **individual or family health insurance waiver** applications for the spring semester.

Interested in **joining *The Tech*?** Email *join@tech.mit.edu.*

Send news and tips to *news@tech.mit.edu.*

640 COVID-19 cases reported in past week

Stuopis predicts that "many" will "catch COVID in the weeks ahead"

By Kristina Chen
EDITOR IN CHIEF

As of 10:00 p.m. ET Jan. 12, MIT Medical has reported 640 positive COVID-19 tests out of 23,037 total tests in the past seven days (Jan. 6 to Jan. 12) for a positivity rate of 2.78%.

MIT's positivity rate is lower than the Cambridge 14-day average of 6.37% and the Massachusetts 7-day average of 21.61%, but the rate of positive cases has increased significantly from the fall semester, where the highest 7-day positivity rate was 0.28%.

Of the 640 positive cases recorded between Jan. 6 and Jan. 12, 268 are students, 275 are employees, and 97 are affiliates. 487 members of the MIT community are currently in isolation.

Since Independent Activities Period (IAP) began Jan. 3, MIT Medical has recorded over 1,000 positive tests. In the week of Jan. 2 through Jan. 8, 965 MIT community members tested positive out of 22,354 tests, for a positive test rate of 4.32%. According to a Dec. 21 email to the MIT community, residential density for undergraduates is expected to be reduced by 40–50% over IAP.

In response to the rising case numbers and spread of the Omicron variant, MIT has implemented various policies, including a requiring a booster vaccine, no longer permitting food to be served at events, updating isolation and contact tracing guidelines, and modifying IAP to reduce campus density.

MIT Medical is organizing a series of booster vaccine clinics during January and at the beginning of the spring semester.

In a Jan. 7 email to the MIT community, MIT Medical Director Cecilia Stuopis '90 wrote that the "highly transmissible Omicron variant has led to a surge in cases across the country, in Massachusetts, and here at MIT."

"Routine testing in recent weeks has revealed hundreds of cases, with a positivity rate around 5%," Stuopis wrote. While MIT is "not aware of any cases from Omicron that have led to hospitalization," in addition to receiving the booster vaccine, Stuopis recommends masking — particularly with a "high-quality mask like an N95/KN95/KF94" — or double-masking indoors, avoiding crowds and social gatherings, and being alert to minor symptoms. KN95 and KF94 masks are available at MIT's testing kit drop-off locations.

Stuopis added that the "variant is so infectious that even the most careful people have tested positive," and that "unfortunately, many of us will still catch COVID in the weeks ahead."

In the event that an individual tests positive for COVID-19, they will be asked to complete MIT Medical's Case Information Form, share close contacts with MIT Medical, isolate for five full days (or more, if fever or symptoms do not improve), and continue to wear a mask for five days following isolation. They will then be exempt from MIT's testing program for 90 days, due to the high rate of non-infectious viral shedding.

MINOR FEELINGS
A cultural tightrope.
ARTS, p. 6

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH UNIONIZATION
A union can ensure better research conditions for graduate workers.
OPINION, p. 4

TIME TO DIVEST
As a scientific institution, MIT should act against climate change. **OPINION, p. 5**

LESSONS FROM P/NR
Self-care, positivity, and letting go of regret.
CAMPUS LIFE, p. 7

SECTIONS
Fun Pages 3
Opinion 4
Arts 6
Campus Life 7
Sports 8

WEATHER

Cold wave sweeps over the southeast

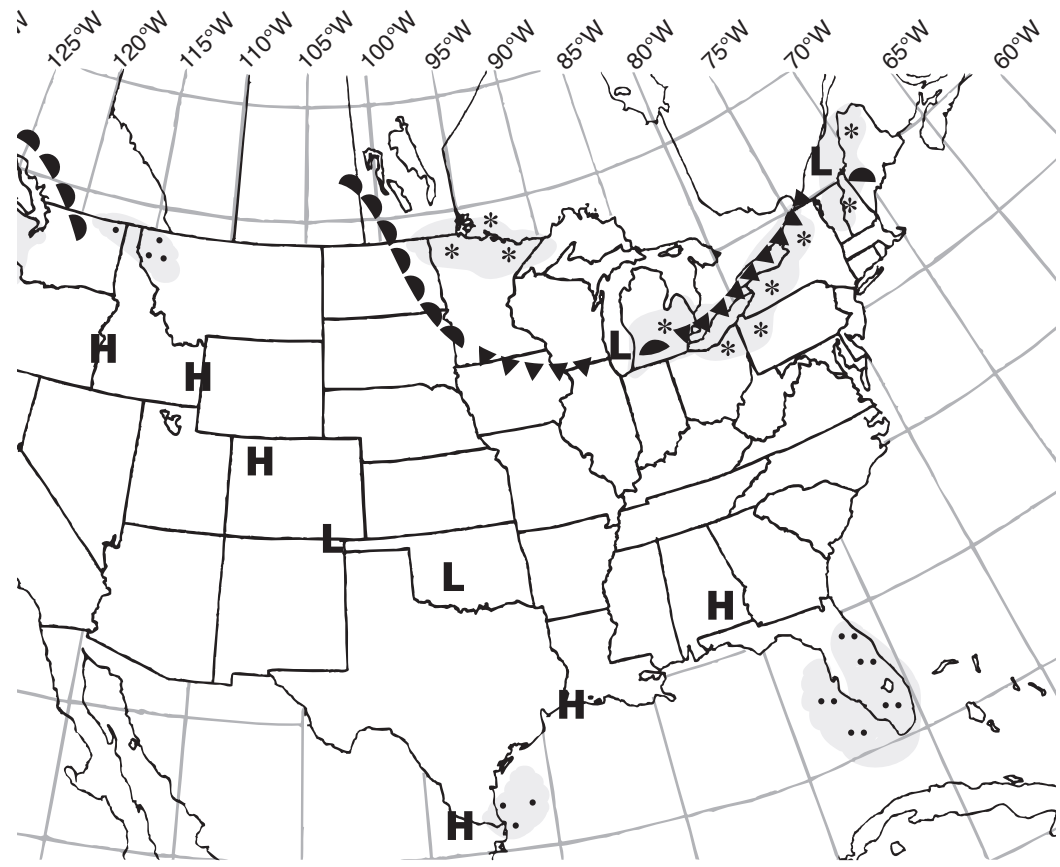
By Maria Geogdzhayeva
STAFF METEOROLOGIST

Don't get too excited after the wonderful (or terrible, depending on who you ask) snowfall of last weekend. While there is some snow coming for Cambridge on Friday, it is unlikely to accumulate past one inch. The weather this weekend will be crisp but sunny – perfect for a walk outside to clear the winter blues. Just make sure you bundle up, and maybe keep your mask up to protect your cheeks from the biting cold.

Meanwhile, the southeastern United States will be getting all the fun. As the midwestern cold air mass sweeps down over the region from Oklahoma to Tennessee, cities such as Memphis and Little Rock will be seeing some rare accumulation of snow on Sunday and Monday. The cold weather might reach as far as northern Georgia, with a high likelihood of freezing rain, hail, and even snow. As the cold wave proceeds towards the northeast, upstate New York will see snowfall, while Massachusetts will only feel its effects as a mix of snow and rain as temperatures climb above freezing on Monday. So, if you have relatives in Paducah, Kentucky, this weekend is the perfect time to FaceTime them and be jealous of their three inches of snow – or goad, depending on how you feel about these things. Cambridge won't be seeing good snow for a while yet.

Extended Forecast

Today: Partly sunny. Chilly, with a high around 42°F (5°C) and light 5-7 mph southwest winds.
Tonight: Mostly cloudy with a low around 33°F (0°C). Light north wind around 6 mph, with a chance of precipitation late at night.
Tomorrow: Likely rain turning to snow by the afternoon, with up to an inch of accumulation. High around 38°F (3°C) and low around 5°F (-15°C), with strong north winds around 10-17 mph.
Saturday: Sunny, with a high around 15°F (-9°C) and a low around 5°F (-15°C) and intense wind around 14-22 mph, gusts up to 33 mph.
Sunday: Sunny, with a high around 29°F (-2°C) and low around 23°F (-5°C), with variable light winds around 6 mph. Likely snow late at night, with increased wind.



Situation for Noon Eastern Time, Thursday, January 13, 2022

Weather Systems	Weather Fronts	Precipitation Symbols			Other Symbols
			Snow	Rain	
H High Pressure	Trough	Showers	* ▽	• ▽	Fog
L Low Pressure	Warm Front	Light	*	•	Thunderstorm
§ Hurricane	Cold Front	Moderate	**	••	Haze
	Stationary Front	Heavy	⁂	∴	Compiled by MIT Meteorology Staff and *The Tech*

BOS

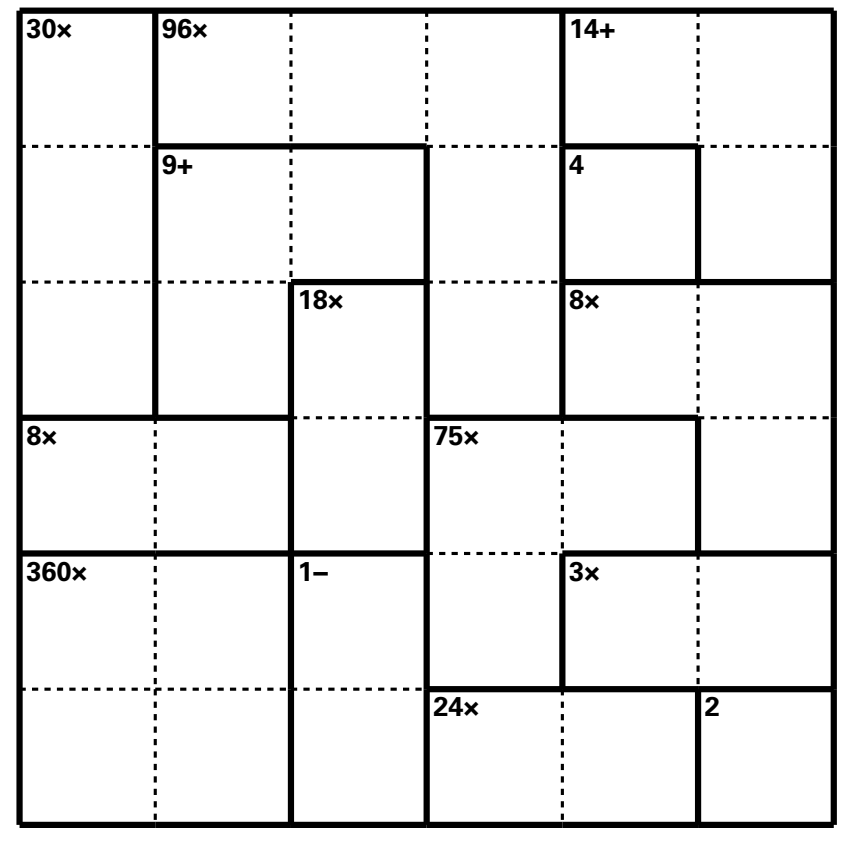
Solution, page 8

7			5	6			4	
5		3		9	4	8		
	4							1
				1		7		
4			9		5			6
		9		2				
6							7	
		1	6	5		4		2
	2			4	8			9

Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column, row, and 3 by 3 grid contains exactly one of each of the digits 1 through 9.

SFO

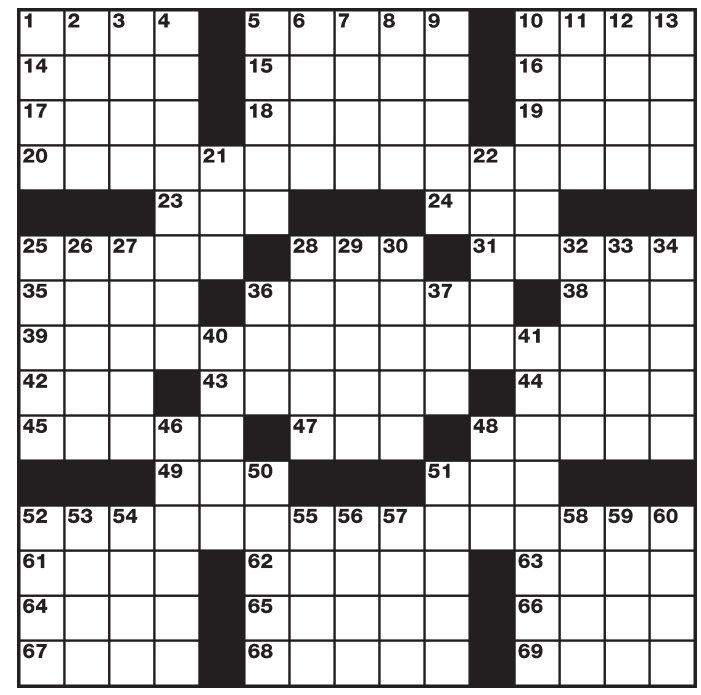
Solution, page 8



Instructions: Fill in the grid so that each column and row contains exactly one of each of the numbers 1–6. Follow the mathematical operations for each box.

Up in the Air by Billie Truitt

Solution, page 8



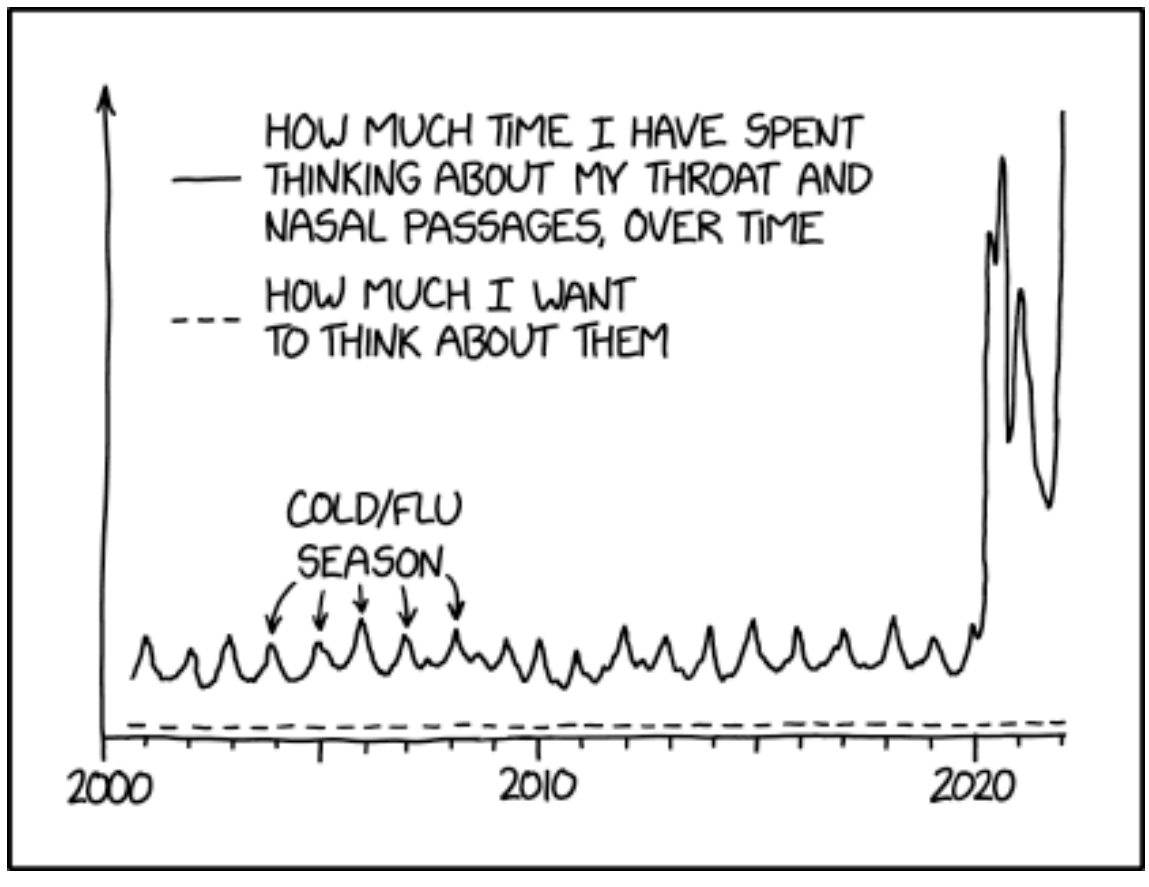
ACROSS

1 Frolic like children
5 Duos
10 "Billy" farm animal
14 Ridesharing rival of Lyft
15 Accumulate, as debts
16 Rowing implements
17 Just passable
18 __ Sam (symbol of America)
19 Pack and send
20 Daydreamer's state
23 Find a purpose for
24 Follower of fa on the scale
25 Baker's cookie quantity
28 Smartphone predecessor: Abbr.
31 Alpine song
35 Post-workout soreness
36 Japanese hostess
38 Yale student
39 "As much as you want"
42 Comics cry of distress
43 Hams it up
44 Jot down
45 "Someone else did it"
47 Boy in the family
48 More reasonable
49 Likely (to)
51 __ room (place to play)
52 Kindred spirits
61 Aroma
62 Doesn't agree to
63 Des Moines' state
64 Mongolian desert
65 Say hello to
66 Unlock
67 Snow coaster
68 Gets cash for
69 Sparrow's home

DOWN

1 Hurry it up
2 Woodwind instrument
3 Southwestern tableland
4 Manufactures
5 Dried plum
6 Parent's sister
7 1/12 of a foot
8 Regulation
9 Project details, for short
10 Try to make it on one's own
11 Honolulu's island
12 Getting little rainfall
13 Sugar amts.
21 Suffix meaning "sort of"
22 Faithful
25 Relay race stick
26 Sound of a sneeze
27 Crime of stealing
28 Mexican coins
29 "Me too"
30 Very pale
32 Speed __ (fast driver)
33 Privileged few
34 Soda bottle size
36 Workout facility
37 Men and boys
40 Doesn't throw out
41 Idleness
46 Capital of Spain
48 Large body of water
50 Salad-serving implements
51 Relaxes
52 Marshy places
53 Object of worship
54 After-bath garment
55 On __ (ablaze)
56 Skater's leap
57 Sense intuitively
58 Aspiration
59 Mothers of lambs
60 Talk angrily

[2563] Throat and Nasal Passages



xkcd
A WEBCOMIC OF ROMANCE, SARCASM. MATH. AND LANGUAGE
by Randall Munroe

I always felt like what the 'you are now aware of your tongue' thing needed in order to be truly enjoyable was an element of mortal peril.

FUNFUNFUNF

The Tech
Established 1881

Publisher
Joanna Lin '21

Editor in Chief
Kristina Chen '23

Business Manager
Daniel Zhang '22

Managing Editor
Chloe McCreery '23

Executive Editor
Wenbo Wu '23

NEWS STAFF

News Editors: Shelley Choi '23, Srinidhi Narayanan '24; **Associate News Editors:** Grace Song '23, Nicole Chan '24; **Staff:** Edwin Song '22, Kylee Carden '23, Kerri Lu '23, Jennifer Ai '24, Mauricio Barba da Costa '24, Daisy Wang '24; **Meteorologist:** Sarah Weidman '21, Trinity Manuelito '23, Phoebe Lin '24.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Editors: Ana P. Reyes Sánchez '22, Arun Wongprommoon '23, William Xu '24; **Staff:** Yichi Zhang G, Laney Flanagan '22, Cristian Martinez-Herrera '22, Alexandra Li '23, Alexis Huang '24, Katherine L. Pan '24, Lydia Patterson '24, Alina Sarmiento '24, Frankie Schulte '24, Mannie Tilo '24, Jakin Ng '25, Syd Robinson '25, Angelina Zheng '25; **Illustrators:** Gloria Lin '21.

SCIENCE STAFF

Staff: Albert Liu '23, Seung Hyeon Shim '23.

SPORTS STAFF

Editor: Suleman Thaniana '23.

ARTS STAFF

Editors: Lulu Tian '22, Liane Xu '23, Erika Yang '23; **Staff:** Vyshnavi Vennelakanti G, Alana Chandler '22, Rajiv Movva '22, Vaishnavi Phadnis '22, Victoria Dzieciol '23, Mindy Long '23.

PHOTOGRAPHY STAFF

Editor: Kevin Ly '22; **Associate Editor:** Maxwell Yun '21, Cady Boronkay '24; **Staff:** Kidist Adamu '22, Katya Bezugla '22, Sophia Fang '22, Shinjini Ghosh '22, Assel Ismoldayeva '22, Alex Li '22, Stephany Pang '22, Kevin S. Chen '23, Maximo Machado '23, Zoe Pasetsky '24, Farin Tavacoli '24, Kate Lu '25, Alexa-Rae Simao '25, Michele Gabriele.

COPY STAFF

Copy Chief: Laura Schmidt-Hong '23; **Associate Copy Chiefs:** Kendall Yu '21, Caitlin Fukumoto '24; **Staff:** Yaseen Alkhafaji '21, Talia Blum '21, Ayomikun Ayodeji '22, Pranit Nanda '22, Clinton Reid '22, Sophia Zhi '22, Stuti Khandwala '23, Michael V. Bhopaul '24, Joseph Li '24, Denzel Segbefia '24, Alicia Yang '24, Sarah Zhao '24, Jyotsna Nair '25.

BUSINESS STAFF

Advertising Manager: Steven Ngo '22; **Operations Manager:** Caroline Bao '23; **Staff:** Asia Hypsher '21, Tafsia Shikdar '21, Leon Yu '21, Alvin Zhu '21, Pranit Nanda '22, Amber Liu '23, Irene Terpstra '23 , Jamil Dellawar '24.

TECHNOLOGY STAFF

Director: Ben Kettle '22; **Staff:** Mario Leyva '22.

ADVISORY BOARD

Nafisa Syed G, Paul E. Schindler, Jr. '74, Barry S. Surman '84, Deborah A. Levinson '91, Saul Blumenthal '98, Satwiksai Seshasai '01, Daniel Ryan Bersak '02, Eric J. Cholankeril '02, Marissa Vogt '06, Andrew T. Lukmann '07, Austin Chu '08, Michael McGraw-Herdeg '08, Marie Y. Thibault '08, Nick Semenkovich '09, Angeline Wang '09, Quentin Smith '10, Jeff Guo '11, Ethan A. Solomon '12, Jessica J. Pourian '13, Anne Cai '14, Jessica L. Wass '14, Bruno Faviero '15, Kali Xu '15, Leon Lin '16, Kath Xu '16, Anthony Yu '16, Colleen Madlinger '17, Lenny Martinez Dominguez '17, Charlie J. Moore '17, William Navarre '17, Emma Bingham '19, Vivian Zhong '19, Ivy Li '20, Áron Ricardo Perez-Lopez '20, Josephine Yu '20, Nathan Liang '21, B. D. Colen.

EDITORS AT LARGE

Contributing Editor: Jack Dinsmore '22; **Senior Editors:** Ivana Alardín '21, Adira Balzac '21, Lior Hirschfeld '21, Ethan Sit '21, Thomas Wang '21.

PRODUCTION STAFF FOR THIS ISSUE

Editors: Ana P. Reyes Sánchez '22; Arun Wongprommoon '23, William Xu '24; **Copy Editors:** Laura Schmidt-Hong '23, Caitlin Fukumoto '24.

The Tech (ISSN 0148-9607) is published on Thursdays during the academic year (except during MIT vacations) and monthly during the summer by The Tech, Room W20-483, 84 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Mass. 02139. Subscriptions are $50.00 per year (third class). **POSTMASTER:** Please send all address changes to our mailing address: The Tech, P.O. Box 397029, Cambridge, Mass. 02139-7029. **TELEPHONE:** Editorial: (617) 253-1541. Business: (617) 258-8324. Facsimile: (617) 258-8226. *Advertising, subscription, and typesetting rates available.* Entire contents © ***2020 The Tech***. *Printed by Graphic Developments, Inc.*

GUEST COLUMN

Empowering ourselves to be better researchers through unionization

Unionization is necessary for graduate workers to carry out MIT's essential research

By Lucy Hu, Madeleine Sutherland, Serita Sulzman, Maddie Dery, Sneha Kabaria, Yadav Gowda, Bridget Begg, Kai Jia, Nishad Gothoskar, and Belinda Li

More than 5,000 graduate workers act as MIT's research engine, accounting for around 65% of the research workforce. We meticulously plan experiments that no one in the world has done before, iterate until the results are scientifically sound, and assemble manuscripts that ultimately contribute to the world's body of knowledge. As the workers closest to our work, **we** are the experts on what resources we need in the workplace to successfully produce MIT's world-class innovations and discoveries. *A majority of graduate workers have signed our union cards because we fundamentally believe that we deserve a voice in our workplace — and unionizing is the only way to guarantee us legally-enforceable negotiating power to win the tools that we need to be outstanding researchers.*

> **We have been frustrated when we have spoken up about these issues individually and been ignored or dismissed.**

Through thousands of conversations with our coworkers, it has become clear that MIT does not provide us with sufficient resources to efficiently produce the best research possible. Many of us lack the equipment and materials we need, have difficulty accessing centralized research infrastructure due to lack of staffing or high turnover (for example, in administrative and core facilities roles), waste excessive time fixing outdated equipment, and have unremediated lab safety concerns. We have been frustrated when we have spoken up about these issues individually and been ignored or dismissed. Even when our advisors have tried to help, the issues only ever seem to rise one or two rungs up the hierarchy of MIT's bureaucracy, remaining unaddressed. Administrators claim it is out of their hands to address staffing and facilities issues. By standing together on these issues which span labs, departments, and schools, our union can amplify our collective voice to create material improvements on these workplace issues.

> **When there is an inappropriate lack of investment in support staff and research infrastructure, we are forced to pick up the slack.**

Graduate workers at MIT currently lack a well-defined job description, leaving the boundaries of our responsibilities extremely ambiguous. As a result, when there is an inappropriate lack of investment in support staff and research infrastructure, we are forced to pick up the slack. Research already involves an incredibly diverse workload: designing and conducting experiments, fabricating materials and devices, analyzing data and characterizing our systems, generating figures, and writing papers. When we also have to take on administrative or maintenance tasks, it detracts from our ability to do research well.

> **Recognizing the heterogeneity of research across the Institute, we can establish and enforce clear bounds on what an RAship is and is not.**

Though many universities, including MIT, claim that graduate students aren't workers, many MIT graduate researchers spend a disruptive fraction of their time — or even a majority — on tasks that don't directly advance their research or their education. For science and engineering fields, when a lab doesn't have a lab manager or consistent administrative support, we graduate researchers are often roped into tasks like:

- Ordering equipment and supplies (submitting purchasing orders, meeting with sales representatives, drafting budget proposals).
- Researching, managing, and maintaining equipment, service contracts, and vendor relationships.
- Fixing machines that are only broken because they're either too old to be serviced or being used for tasks they aren't designed for.
- Providing administrative help in classes for which we are not TAs (making copies, running Canvas, teaching classes when the PI has a scheduling conflict).
- Scheduling group meetings or visitor agendas.
- Manufacturing our own reagents or testing apparatuses.
- Working on pet projects for our PIs instead of our dissertation research.
- Writing our PIs' grants and reports without their help or contributions.
- Serving as our PIs' personal moving crew when they move facilities.
- Serving as our PIs' babysitter or petsitter.

For graduate researchers, saying no to these tasks complicates our relationships with our advisors. We do this unpaid work because we fear for our funding, timeline for graduation, and prospect for job recommendations. **With a union, we will be able to delineate basic job descriptions for graduate workers, and most importantly, we will have the power to ensure our time is spent on advancing research rather than fixing broken equipment.** Recognizing the heterogeneity of research across the Institute, we can establish and enforce clear bounds on what an RAship is and is not.

The MIT dogma of decentralization insists that every Department/Lab/Center's (DLC) needs are so unique that they cannot possibly adopt any of the same policies and practices successfully. But the reality is, across all departments, we share some common struggles that prevent us from researching in an efficient and sustainable way:

- Unclear job descriptions and workload expectations.
- Inadequate protection of university holidays, sick days, and vacation days.
- Unclear guidelines within research collaborations between groups or institutions.
- Mental or physical health issues.
- Inconsistent or inadequate mentorship.
- Lack of adequate work space.

Of course, there are still department or field-specific issues. Some departments don't guarantee PhD students year-round funding. Others have attrition rate gaps and qualifying exam initial pass rate discrepancies between genders and underrepresented minorities. Researchers in the humanities and social sciences have fixed-term funding schedules, with little opportunity for extensions or dissertation-year fellowships. This makes the situation for these researchers more precarious, in particular when they suffer delays to their research, or when the job market worsens, as has happened during the pandemic.

> **Union contracts empower graduate workers to manage our time in a way that is healthy, balanced, and constructive.**

The MIT Graduate Student Union (GSU) is composed of a majority of workers in every department to capture a diversity of experiences when developing bargaining goals. Ensuring representation will give us the opportunity to negotiate a contract that meets every department's — *and every worker's* — needs.

Other graduate worker unions have won contract provisions guaranteeing access to the equipment, facilities, and institutional support that graduate workers reasonably need to do their jobs (see, for example, the University of Michigan, University of Connecticut, and University of California system). Contracts also protect graduate workers from overwork and burnout by setting clear standards for work hours and time off — while allowing graduate workers to work more than the specified amount *for their own research and teaching goals* when they choose to do so. **Union contracts empower graduate workers to manage our time in a way that is healthy, balanced, and constructive.**

Teachers unionize to reduce class sizes so they can focus on providing the best education possible to their students. Nurses unionize to fight understaffing so they can give their patients quality care. **We're unionizing so we can focus on conducting world-class research.** Only when every single scholar at MIT — every electrical engineer, historian, chemist, architect, evolutionary biologist — is empowered to show up fully for their work will we reach our true potential. Join us by signing your union card today.

OPINION POLICY

Editorials are the official opinion of *The Tech*. They are written by the Editorial Board, which consists of Publisher Joanna Lin, Editor in Chief Kristina Chen, Managing Editor Chloe McCreery, Executive Editor Wenbo Wu, and the opinion editor, a position that is currently vacant.

Dissents are the signed opinions of editorial board members choosing to publish their disagreement with the editorial.

Letters to the editor, **columns**, and **editorial cartoons** are written by individuals and represent the opinion of the author, not necessarily that of the newspaper. Electronic submissions are encouraged and should be sent to *letters@tech.mit.edu*. Hard copy submissions should be addressed to *The Tech*, P.O. Box 397029, Cambridge, Mass. 02139-7029, or sent by interdepartmental mail to Room W20-483. All submissions are due by noon four (4) calendar days before the date of publication.

Letters, columns, and cartoons must bear the authors' signatures, addresses, and phone numbers. Unsigned letters will not be accepted. *The Tech* reserves the right to edit or condense letters; shorter letters will be given higher priority. Once submitted, all letters become property of *The Tech*, and will not be returned. Letters, columns, and cartoons may also be posted on *The Tech*'s Web site and/or printed or published in any other format or medium now known or later that becomes known. *The Tech* makes no commitment to publish all the letters received.

Guest columns are opinion articles submitted by members of the MIT or local community.

TO REACH US

The Tech's telephone number is (617) 253-1541. Email is the easiest way to reach any member of our staff. If you are unsure whom to contact, send mail to *general@tech.mit.edu*, and it will be directed to the appropriate person. You can reach the editor in chief by emailing *eic@tech.mit.edu*. Please send press releases, requests for coverage, and information about errors that call for correction to *news@tech.mit.edu*. Letters to the editor should be sent to *letters@tech.mit.edu*. *The Tech* can be found on the World Wide Web at *http://thetech.com*.

GUEST COLUMN

Now is the time for MIT to divest from the fossil fuel industry

MIT must take responsibility in the crisis of climate change

By Alexis Simao, Kenny Cox, and Mitali Chowdhury

In November 2021, as the world watched, delegates from United Nations countries met in Glasgow for the COP26 conference on climate change in an attempt to limit the global temperature increase to no more than 1.5ºC above pre-Industrial Revolution levels. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is increasingly urgent, and fossil fuel companies' role in perpetuating the climate crisis is crystal clear. However, until the behavior of fossil fuel companies changes, meaningful progress towards combating climate change will remain impossible. The agreement to emerge from COP26 explicitly addressed fossil fuels — unfortunately a first for a climate accord. But even at the very event where this pledge was finally made, the fossil fuel industry sent so many representatives that they outnumbered the delegates from any single country. It is no coincidence that over the course of COP26, the language was watered down between drafts, going from calling for an end to all fossil fuel subsidies to only phasing out inefficient ones.

> **Action to reduce our dependence on polluting energy sources has been too little, too late, with fossil fuel companies blocking much progress.**

Action to reduce our dependence on polluting energy sources has been too little, too late, with fossil fuel companies blocking much progress. Organizers in the divestment movement seek to address one facet of this issue by removing investments in the fossil fuel industry. Together as the MIT community, we can make the statement that not only are the harmful actions of fossil fuel companies morally inexcusable, and out of line with the urgently necessary global transition to clean energy, they're simply a bad investment. As more organizations divest, societal pressure against the bad practices of fossil fuel companies is growing, helping to drive the widespread adoption of sustainable energy sources.

> **At the forefront of the divestment movement are colleges and universities, including many peers of MIT.**

At the forefront of the divestment movement are colleges and universities, including many peers of MIT. In the Boston area, Harvard pledged to divest from fossil fuels Sept. 9, followed shortly by Boston University Sept. 23. Oct. 8, Dartmouth pledged to divest, making it the fifth of eight Ivy League schools to take this important step. Yet as this list continues to grow, where is MIT — a technological leader of the world, a school committed to science and knowledge, and an institution supposedly committed to combating climate change?

In truth, MIT's current level of response to the climate crisis is inadequate and disappointing compared to the scope of the problem. Nothing short of full divestment and a commitment to pursuing green, equitable energy research would be appropriate. Instead, on the financial side, MIT's Investment Management Company (MITIMCo) has released a lackluster "Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Investment Framework." MITIMCo prides itself on making investment decisions "based on our knowledge of MIT's values and the guidance we receive from the Institute's leadership and governance" but continues to invest in the fossil fuel industry. The Draft Report of the MIT Values Statement Committee offered "Mind, Hand, Heart" as MIT's motto; surely, investing in an industry known to pollute our planet and lie about its actions, simply to continue profiting off existing infrastructure, is antithetical to those principles. As fossil fuel companies continue to benefit from investors like MIT and enable the disasters that result from climate change, they continue to inflict harm around the globe.

One counter-argument offered against the prospect of full divestment is that the investments are outside of MITIMCo's control: they only choose the investment managers, not the ultimate destination of the money. However, this claim does not hold up to scrutiny, since other institutions with similar investment structures as MIT, such as Rutgers, George Washington University, and Cambridge University, have divested. In addition, MIT still has leverage to control which investment managers they hire — and they have a large pool from which to choose. In the past 12 months, MIT received cold emails from 1,800 prospective managers. It is inconceivable that none held values aligned with promoting investment into green energy over fossil fuels. In the 2021 fiscal year, MIT's endowment experienced an unprecedented 64% increase in its unrestricted funds category, which much of its fossil fuel investment money comes from. There is a choice the Institute must make about where to put those new funds: into destructive fossil-fuel investments, or into industries and activities that support humanity's future.

> **MIT's current level of response to the climate crisis is inadequate and disappointing compared to the scope of the problem.**

Even MIT's direct response to climate change, in the form of the new Climate Action Plan (CAP), is disappointing and ineffective. Despite the CAP's strong rhetoric and broad scope of goals, the lack of any aggressive action and measurable accountability is marked. If MIT's mission really is to "go as far as we can, as fast as we can," why do we continue to engage with the industry that has led humanity into this predicament and shown no intentions of changing its toxic behavior? Instead of being a technological and political leader to change the tide of climate change, MIT has once again shown that the institution prioritizes the status quo over meaningful change.

> **Even MIT's direct response to climate change, in the form of the new Climate Action Plan (CAP), is disappointing and ineffective.**

There's no better time to act than now. As the world races to minimize the catastrophic damage that will be inescapable to future generations if nothing is done, MIT must use every tool at its disposal to aid in the fight against climate change. The majority of MIT's student body, the Undergraduate Association, and the majority of MIT faculty support divestment. Other community representatives have endorsed divestment, including the Cambridge City Council in a unanimous resolution, and Boston Mayor Michelle Wu has backed the idea and signed an ordinance to divest city investments. As MIT holds onto its increasingly unprofitable fossil fuel investments, those same companies continue to spew out greenhouse gases, sending us all spiraling towards a worse and worse future.

MIT is a leading technical institution primarily because of the brilliant faculty members and students who have come here with an appetite for solving the hardest problems, in service to society. Climate change may be a hard problem to solve, but it is nonetheless a problem that our institution can help rectify in an effective and equitable manner. It is time for MIT to put its money where its mouth is and divest from the fossil fuel industry now.

WANTED

sports·writ·er(s)

/ˈspôrts ˌrīdərs/

noun

noun: sports writers

journalists who write about sports.

No prior experience needed! Just an interest in sports. And probably writing.

For more information, please contact **sports@the-tech.mit.edu**

ARTS ARTS ARTS ARTS ARTS ARTS ARTS ARTS

BOOK REVIEW

My rude awakening: *Minor Feelings*

Examining my ethnic experience has been hard but invaluable

By Mindy Long
STAFF WRITER

"A space is overrun when there are too many Asians, and 'too many' can be as few as three," writes Cathy Park Hong, a poet, writer, and professor at Rutgers University. Reading those lines, I feel myself transported back to my own childhood. Whenever there was more than one Asian girl in the class, I would, without fail, be mistaken as another Emma or Alicia. It didn't matter if it was the third day of class or the last day of class or that one of us had glasses and the other didn't.

"Minor Feelings" has been painful yet eye-opening for me, a second-generation Chinese-American. In broad terms, the essay collection is about the Asian-American experience. Too often, Asian Americans have been dismissed as the model minority, a myth justified by the fact that on paper, we are law-abiding and economically well-off. According to Hong, whites ignore us, and African Americans distrust us. We exist only to "grease the corporate wheels" but are fated to never rise above middle management. This puts us in a tenuous position in the American social hierarchy. We are almost invisible to the public eye. Hong addresses this in the opening pages of "Minor Feelings": "Most Americans know nothing about Asian Americans. They think *Chinese* is synecdoche for *Asians* the way *Kleenex* is for *tissues*." We often forget that the term Asian American encompasses Southeast Asians, South Asians, East Asians, Pacific Islanders of all genders, sexualities, religions, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Following the wake-up call to her audience about the need for Asian-American unity, Hong recounts her own experiences of being invisible in America. From unknowingly being dressed by her mother in a Playboy shirt in elementary school to being admonished by peers in college for writing about "ethnic" themes in her poetry, Hong's stream-of-consciousness-esque account of her life and lineage is a heart-wrenching journey. Hong's parents escaped South Korea at the end of the Korean War to start a new life in the U.S. On the heels of the success of her father's dry cleaning business, her family eventually moved out of South Central LA's Koreatown to the safer and newer Orange County suburbs. Despite the move, Hong found that she could not escape her father's inability to protect his own family from casual racism nor her mother's borderline psychotic tirades towards her and her sister. To further complicate her childhood, the suburbs exposed Hong to the "minor feelings" of being Asian in a white world.

Hong defines "minor feelings" as the "cognitive dissonance" when "American optimism is enforced upon you, which contradicts your own racialized reality." In her eyes, this manifests in shame of oneself and of one's culture. For her and me and many Asian Americans, this entailed the reconciliation of the "normal" outside world — friends who received weekly allowances and ate mac and cheese and burgers for dinner — to reality — mothers who hang laundry outside and who constantly remind you to study hard to repay the suffering they overcame to immigrate.

She then names the book's interwoven themes: shame and indebtedness. We are ashamed of our flat features and of our parents who speak bad English. We are obligated to feel indebted to our parents, who in turn, feel indebted to America for granting them the opportunity for a new life. According to Hong, the sum of this shame and indebtedness creates a self-hating Asian. When we hate ourselves for our looks and mannerisms, we let that hate spill over to how we treat others. Hong confesses she is guilty of this. At a Vietnamese nail salon once, she screamed at a teenage boy for pinching her toe too hard and for not addressing her with respect. Immediately afterwards, she regretted her actions. "I hoped the father would later punish him by withholding his paycheck. But the boy probably didn't even get a paycheck."

How many times have I inwardly sighed when I talked to a call center employee from India? How many times have I talked as if to a child when placing my order at an Asian restaurant? What did those employees do to deserve my disdain? They are probably working harder than I ever have, struggling to feed and clothe their families.

"Minor" aggressions have pervaded nearly every facet of society. One prime example is Hollywood. Recently, I had the chance to meet Al'n Duong and Bao Tran, producer and director, respectively, of the 2020 martial arts comedy-drama, *The Paper Tigers*. The cast is almost entirely people of color (POC). It almost did not turn out that way. Duong shared his experience pitching the film to Hollywood executives. A studio offered them $4 million to replace the lead character, intended to be an Asian male, with a white actor instead. To add insult to the injury, the studio sent a mid-level Asian executive to sell them the whitewashing. Unfortunately, the move was not surprising, confessed Bao, but it will always be "disappointing."

The final aspect of the Asian-American experience Hong discusses is our inability to vocalize our trauma. This handicap is not innate but instead forced upon us by our culture: "Speak[ing] of pain would not only retraumatize me but traumatize everyone I love… How many Asian women would then feel bold enough to report sexual assault in their cultures of secrecy and shame? Denial is always the salve…" Here, Hong calls attention to gender-based violence towards Asian-American women. The Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence reports that 21–55%of Asian women in the U.S. experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. Why the large range? For one, as Hong explained above, most Asian women do not report attacks for fear of shame. Furthermore, violence against Asian women is almost never covered in the news. Only this past year after the Atlanta spa shootings, in which a 21-year old white man shot and killed eight women, six of whom were Asian, did national attention and discussion finally focus on violence towards Asian women. Should it really take eight deaths for those conversations to start?

I can also relate to the difficulty in speaking about personal trauma. Whenever I cried or complained as a child, my mother always chided me to 忍 *ren*: bear or endure. If I was bullied at school or disrespected by a cashier or scolded by my parents, I always told myself to *ren*. After all, hadn't my parents and grandparents lived through much worse? As a result, I learned to internalize my emotions. Whatever I was struggling through was miniscule — *inconsequential* — compared to the struggles of my ancestors.

I saw the people around me struggle through pain as well. Oftentimes, their pain was much worse than mine. My friends struggled with their mental health, unsupported by parents who did not believe in mental health. My belief in *ren* shattered then. When is it too much to bear? Should we have to *ren* to the point where we are on the verge of physical harm, even death? When can we stop enforcing our toxic silence and secrecy? When can we stop downplaying the struggles of others?

The Asian-American experience is unique. Caught between two cultures, we learn to tightrope walk the boundary between the normal, white-defined, outside world and the traditional world our parents or grandparents still carry. This is not to blame our parents and ancestors for the culture we were born into. For the most part, they did their best to raise us the only way they knew how — the way they were raised. We Asian Americans — the "model" minority, the forgotten minority — must "[emancipate] ourselves of our conditional existence," argues Hong in her closing lines. We must not be scared to examine our past and to acknowledge our experiences. We should not be content to color within the lines society has drawn for us. We have been invisible for too long. If we want to be recognized, we must first recognize ourselves.

VIVIAN'S REFLECTIONS

What P/NR taught me

Looking on the bright side, practicing self-care, and more lessons from first semester

By Vivian Hir

Your instructor has released grade changes and new comments for Midterm 1. Seeing that email, I felt dread. I knew that I had done poorly on my 5.07 (Introduction to Biological Chemistry) midterm. I didn't want to see my grade, yet I wanted to know what I got. My fingers shook as I opened the website and the moment I saw my score, my heart sank. Seventy out of 100. A C–. The lowest test grade I had ever scored. Below average. While I was still absorbing the fact that I didn't do well, a voice inside of me whispered, "At least I am on Pass/No Record (P/NR)." This fact raised questions that I used to ignore. Shouldn't I be glad that I got a passing score in my class? Why was I letting a number define me so much?

The more I pondered my attitude towards grades throughout the day, the more I thought about how hard it was to remove my unhealthy fixation on grades. Ever since middle school, I had viewed grades as a reflection of my self-worth and intelligence. I objectively knew that my attitude was not right, yet I found it challenging to break free from this mindset that I had held for many years. After reflecting upon my realization that day, I decided that now was the time for me to change this negative mindset. I couldn't keep delaying this moment.

> **This time, however, I focused on the positive.**

A few weeks after seeing my score, I gradually began to fully embrace P/NR instead of telling myself to get As in everything. Despite this change, I still tried my best on the second midterm for 5.07. When I saw my score of 74, I had an unexpected reaction, but in a good way. Normally, I would have been very sad and remained shell-shocked about how I didn't do well on a test. This time, however, I focused more on the positive. "Well, at least I improved by four points," I told myself. "Also, this class is not designed for first-year students."

P/NR made me aware of the importance of self-care, a practice that I tended to overlook in high school. I realized for the first time that instead of expecting myself to get everything right the first time, I should accept the fact that I would make mistakes along the way. MIT has P/NR for first-semester freshmen for a reason. The transition from high school to college is quite big and involves not only adjusting to more difficult curricula but also various aspects of college life, such as living in a dorm and learning how to be an adult. If it weren't for P/NR, I would still be obsessing over itty-bitty points I lost or fussing about small things like missing a question on a problem set. In other words, not having P/NR would allow my high school mindset to persist. I highly doubt that I would have otherwise taken the time to pause and question whether my approach towards learning was ideal.

> **MIT has P/NR for first-semester freshmen for a reason.**

Besides encouraging me to adopt a healthier mindset when it comes to academics, P/NR has taught me to embrace a lifestyle that has a balance of work and fun. A year ago, I found the idea of giving myself unstructured free time on the weekends unimaginable. Now, however, I force myself to leave campus every once in a while to explore my surroundings, from the Museum of the Fine Arts to the Harvard Museum of Natural History.

> **Four years of undergrad may sound like a long time, but in reality it is short.**

Because of P/NR, I am better at telling myself that there is more to life than grades and test scores. Four years of undergrad may sound like a long time, but in reality it is short, so I had better live my college experience to the fullest. I want to look back on my college years not with remorse for caring too much about getting all As, but rather with happiness about the unforgettable memories I formed here.

Do you have a story to tell?

Can you tell a personal story in writing or in an interview?

The Tech wants to publish stories from the MIT community

Sample topics:

Experiencing discrimination at MIT

Choosing between divergent career paths

Your slice of MIT culture

Romance at MIT

Or anything else you can tell as a compelling story

The Tech
Established 1881

Email cl@the-tech.mit.edu with stories or proposals

SPORTSSPORTSSPORTSS